



Testimony to Appropriations Committee  
In Support of Funding for After School Programs  
Originally Scheduled: February 13, 2014  
Re-Scheduled to: February 24, 2014

Submitted by Wendy Gerbier  
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Housing Authority for the City of Norwalk

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Wendy Gerbier, Director of the NHA Learning Centers for the Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk, which operates eighteen public housing developments housing twenty-four hundred and forty-six (2,446) residents.

Eleven developments are for families, housing a total number of eight hundred and ninety-two (892) children. We have been operating a state-funded Connecticut After School Grant Program for Literacy that is free to residents since 2007. In 2010, our program won a National Award of Excellence from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO). Our Program provides certified teachers to work with one hundred and twenty-five low-income minority resident youth in grades kindergarten through fifth. It is making an impact by assisting students with quality after school academic literacy support that builds their skills sets and enrichment programs that enhance their overall well-being. Because of this program, enrolled students have made positive strides in literacy academic performance. In addition, parents have been freed to work and bring much needed incomes into low-income homes.

We wish to add our voice to those of other programs representing thousands of children and their families through the Connecticut After School Program - and the thousands of children this program could potentially serve - in support of the following requests...

1. **Reinstate Full After School Grant Funding** by adding \$3.9 million to the After School Grant line in the Department of Education budget so that the number of school programs running well-rounded academic and enrichment programs for the entire school year could be increased from 26 programs to approximately 40 programs. These programs would be funded at up to \$200,000 per program for the academic school year.
2. **Create A New Summer Learning Grant Program** by adding a \$6.2 million Summer Learning Grant line item. Studies have shown that students lose many of the skills they acquired during the academic year during summer if they are not kept engaged in the learning process. This loss is especially hard on low-income minority youth, the population we serve, whose parents and guardians may not have much education or may not speak or read English well enough to help their children retain learned skills over the summer. In addition, many students in the summer suffer from the loss of the free and reduced meals provided for them during the school year. This funding would provide both academic support to stem learning loss and nurture their well-being. We understand that grants would range from \$50,000 to \$300,000 depending on the number of students served and provide recreation and enrichments as well as academics.
3. **Reinstate "After School Quality Enhancement"** by adding \$150,000 to the After School Quality Enhancement line in the Department of Education budget to be used to build a quality improvement infrastructure for after school and summer youth programs. This line would enable work to begin on a statewide accreditation system for programs serving school-age children.

Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening.

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